

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 2-22 are pending in the present application. Claims 2-8, 11, 13, 18, and 20-22 are amended and Claim 1 is canceled without prejudice by the present amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 3-5, 7, 11, and 12 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by Letchak et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,661,463, herein “Letchak”); Claims 18-20 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Letchak and Powell et al. (U.S. Patent No. 4,719,550, herein “Powell”); and Claims 2, 6, 8-10, 13-17, 21, and 22 were indicated as allowable if rewritten in independent form.

Because the present amendment reduces the number of issues for appeal by canceling Claim 1 and raises no new issues, entry of this amendment under 37 C.F.R. § 1.116 is believed to be in order and it is therefore respectfully requested.

Applicants thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter. In view of this indication, Claims 2, 6, 8, 13, 21, and 22 are rewritten in independent form including the features of their base claims and any intervening claims, without adding new matter. Independent Claim 1 is cancelled and Claims 3, 4, 5, 7, 11, 18, and 20 are amended to not depend from independent Claim 1. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 2-22 are allowable.

Regarding the rejections on the merits of Claims 1, 3-5, 7, 11, 12, and 18-20, Applicants respectfully submit that those rejections are moot because independent Claim 1 has been cancelled and the remaining claims recite subject matter indicated as allowable. Accordingly, it is respectfully submitted that Claims 2-22 patentably distinguish over the applied art.

A new Abstract is presented that better conforms with amended independent Claim 2.

No new matter has been added.

Consequently, in light of the above discussion and in view of the present amendment, the present application is believed to be in condition for allowance and an early and favorable action to that effect is respectfully requested.

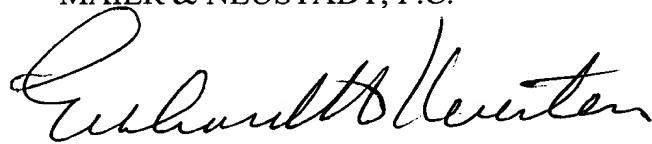
Respectfully submitted,

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